

## 1 Samuel 14:24-52 - Thursday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014

- Last week we ended with a courageous Jonathan, and his loyal armor bearer, miraculously defeating the massive army of the Philistines.
- Then, when it became evident that God had given them the victory, King Saul comes out from his pomegranate tree and joins in the battle.
- And, all the Israelites who ran and hid in fear at the sight of this enormous Philistine army also came out from hiding and joined the battle.

(24) And the men of Israel were distressed that day, for Saul had placed the people under oath, saying, "Cursed *is* the man who eats *any* food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food.

- What Saul does here is so wrong on every level, and it's really just the beginning of his foolishness, which comes from self-centeredness.
- It's evidenced in why he places the people under an oath with his oppressive fast, then pronouncing a curse upon them were they to eat.
- Saul's self serving motives are exposed when he says, cursed is the man who eats any food before "I" take vengeance on "my" enemies.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a bit; I think it would be good if we take the time to identify some of the lessons we can learn from all this.
- The first lesson Saul's foolishness teaches us sort of dovetails off of what we saw him doing when he hears the Philistines were attacked.
- First, he takes a roll call of sorts so as to figure out who among the Israelites had gone to battle against the Philistines without his knowing.

- Much to their surprise, it was King Saul's own son, Jonathan, and his armor bearer. To me, what Saul does next is even more interesting.
- He has the ark of God brought to him to spiritually discern whether or not they should join Jonathan and his armor bearer in the battlefield.
- Here's what I'm thinking, Saul taking a roll call seems to imply that he's more concerned about whoever was leading this taking the credit.

- Then, when Saul having the ark of God brought to him seems to imply that he's seeking God's will in order for him to be able to save face.
- Then, if that weren't bad enough, Saul imposing this fast and pronouncing this curse seems to imply that he'd discerned this as God's will.
- The common denominator with all three of these is that Saul has the outward appearance of being spiritually discerning in seeking God.

- All that to say this, the first lesson Saul can teach us is it's foolish and futile to appear spiritual outwardly to cover up the carnality inwardly.
- Actually, this is the textbook response in the sense that carnal Christians and even leaders, try to overcompensate with a hyper spirituality.
- This because, they have to put on an outward façade so as to mask their insecurity, and carnality, inwardly, lest they were to be exposed.

Matthew 23:25-28 NIV "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (26) Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. (27) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. (28) In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

I like this illustration concerning whitewashed tombs: 'The Queen Mary was the largest ship to cross the oceans when it was launched in 1936. Through four decades and a World War she served until she was retired, anchored as a floating hotel and museum in Long Beach, California. During the conversion, her three massive smokestacks were removed and scraped down, to be repainted. But on the dock they crumbled. Nothing was left of the 3/4 inch steel plate from which the stacks had been formed. All that remained were more than thirty coats of paint that had been applied over the years. The steel had rusted away. When Jesus called the Pharisees "Whitewashed tombs," He meant they had no substance, only an exterior appearance.

- This brings us to the second lesson we can learn from Saul, which is the folly and futility of vanity. Frankly, Saul is a pride-filled narcissist.
- Personally, I cannot wrap my mind around Saul not immediately going into the battlefield once he learned that it was his own son Jonathan.
- The only way I even come close to explaining, not excusing it is Saul is so self-absorbed that he is incapable of considering anybody else.

- For Saul to pronounce a curse on anyone who ate any food before "he" meted out "his" vengeance "his" enemy's is telling to say the least.
- It becomes quite obvious that Saul thinks it's all about him. Apparently, he's so self centered he believes everything revolves around him.
- It's his battle, it's his enemy, it's his vengeance, it's his oath, it's his fast, and it's his curse he pronounces on everyone else because of him.

- This ties into the third lesson we can learn from Saul, which is the folly and futility of self-promotion, which leads to a self-imposed authority.
- It's not Saul's place to take it upon himself to pronounce this curse upon the Israelites by virtue of the fact that he is a king, and not a priest.
- Back in chapter 13:8-9 Saul did a similar thing when he refused to wait for Samuel and takes it upon himself to perform the priestly duties.

- A fourth lesson we can learn from Saul is the folly and futility of not leading by example, which he does when he imposes this fast on them.
- Let me explain, leading by example and simply fasting himself would have allowed for the Israelites to follow and fast of their own volition.
- Instead, Saul forces them, and even curses them if they don't follow his demands, and in so doing displays the worst possible leadership.

- This brings us to the fifth lesson we can learn from Saul. It's the folly and futility of making rash decisions on the impulse of the moment.
- For Saul to impose a fast and proclaim a curse is not only folly and futility, it's stupidity, this because, the Israelites need strength for battle.
- Interesting, we're told why the men of Israel were distressed that day; it wasn't the battle, it was because of Saul's oath before the battle.

(25) Now all *the people* of the land came to a forest; and there was honey on the ground. (26) And when the people had come into the woods, there was the honey, dripping; but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath. (27) But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath; therefore he stretched out the end of the rod that *was* in his hand and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his countenance brightened.

- This is so very interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is how rich this is with typology, namely, that of the rod and honey.
- Notice it's when Jonathan stretches out the rod that's in his hand, dips it into the honeycomb and eats it that he's revived and strengthened.
- Here's where I'm going with this, the rod is a type of authority, and the honey is a type of God's Word, which will revive and strengthens us.

In his book, "Wilson's Dictionary of Bible Types," Walter Lewis Wilson, citing Numbers 17:2, writes, "[The Rod] ...is an emblem of authority from God. It was a sign and proof to all Israel that Aaron was His chosen high priest to lead the people in their worship, and was His chosen mediator between Himself and the people of Israel. When it budded in the tabernacle, and the others did not, He was showing Israel that He rejected the claims of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and all others who assumed the place of leadership. He was also revealing the fact that He could take any old dead 'stick,' bring it into His presence, and change that person into a beautiful and fruitful Christian."

**Psalms 119:103 NKJV** How sweet are Your words to my taste, *Sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

**Psalms 19:7-10 NIV** The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. (8) The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. (9) The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. (10) They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

**Ezekiel 3:1-3 NKJV** Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." (2) So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. (3) And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.

**Revelation 10:8-11 NKJV** (8) Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." (9) So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." (10) Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. (11) And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

- Here's the take away from all of this, when, not if, I grow weary in the battle, I need look no further than to the authority of the Word of God.
- Just as the honey is sweet in my mouth, so too is God's Word sweet to my soul. Yes, it may be a bitter pill to swallow, but it's for my good.
- Yes there's always a Saul that wants to keep me from it, but be a Jonathan and partake of it, lest you faint and lose heart in spiritual battle.

(28) Then one of the people said, "Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, 'Cursed *is* the man who eats food this day.'" And the people were faint. (29) But Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. Look now, how my countenance has brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. (30) How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now would there not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?"

- How sad is this? Jonathan tells them that if they had eaten freely there would have been a much greater victory amongst the Philistines.
- You probably already know where I'm going with this; in keeping with our typology so too is this true for us when it comes to God's Word.
- How many times could our victory been "much greater," had we but "eaten freely" of the sweetness of the Word of God and been revived.

(31) Now they had driven back the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. So the people were very faint. (32) And the people rushed on the spoil, and took sheep, oxen, and calves, and slaughtered *them* on the ground; and the people ate *them* with the blood. (33) Then they told Saul, saying, "Look, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood!" So he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a large stone to me this day."

- Couple of thoughts as it relates to why they're sinning against the Lord by eating the spoil with the blood, which was expressly forbidden.
- First, the men of Israel had disobeyed God, vis-à-vis having obeyed Saul, in that the imposed law of man led them to break the law of God.
- The fact of the matter is, this is textbook legalism, and we can write the next chapter because legalism causes a rebellion against the rules.

- The second thought is concerning how Saul has the gall to actually blame them for "dealing treacherously" and sinning against the Lord.
- The reason I point this out is because true to form Saul is unwilling to and seemingly incapable of saying three simple words, "I was wrong."
- This is also textbook in the sense that, people who will never admit that they are wrong, will always blame someone else for being wrong.

Henry Morris of this says, "Because of Saul's foolish oath, the fighting men were faint with hunger by the time the Philistines were routed, causing them to eat of the captured cattle without taking the time to drain the blood. This was contrary to God's law in Leviticus 17:10."

- There's something else here that I would like to point out before we move on to verse thirty-four and it has to do with why they even do this.
- Please know that I in no way wish to excuse what they do rather, I want to explain "why" they do what they do when they eat unclean meat.
- Because they didn't eat the clean meat of God's Word, they'd become so hungry that they'd end up eating the unclean meat of the world.

(34) Then Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people, and say to them, 'Bring me here every man's ox and every man's sheep, slaughter *them* here, and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.'" So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night, and slaughtered *it* there. (35) Then Saul built an altar to the LORD. This was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

- Here we're told how Saul, after blaming them, builds an altar to the Lord, and it's noted that this was the first altar that he built to the Lord.
- However, while this may seem to be right and even spiritual outwardly I'm of the belief that this is evidence of Saul's spiritual pride inwardly.
- Here's how I get there, Saul isn't the one to build an altar, the priest is, and for Saul to build this altar once again demonstrates arrogance.

(36) Now Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and plunder them until the morning light; and let us not leave a man of them." And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you." Then the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." (37) So Saul asked counsel of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel?" But He did not answer him that day. (38) And Saul said, "Come over here, all you chiefs of the people, and know and see what this sin was today. (39) For *as* the LORD lives, who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But not a man among all the people answered him.

- To say this disturbing would be a gross understatement for several reasons chief of which is what Saul says concerning his son, Jonathan.
- Here's why, for Saul to make yet another rash vow knowing full well that his own son Jonathan may die because of it implies that he knew.
- More specifically, Saul knew that Jonathan had eaten from the honey, and wrongly assumed that this was the reason God didn't answer.

- Unbeknownst to Saul, the reason God isn't answering him is because of him. In other words, Jonathan isn't the problem he is the problem.
- Be that as it may, this pales in comparison to the problem of Saul making a vow that he knows full well his son was likely to have broken.
- One has to wonder whether or not Saul perceives his own son as a threat to his kingdom and as such, is seeking a way to have him killed.

One commentator said it this way, "Strange perverseness! He who was so indulgent as to spare wicked Agag, chapter 15, is now so severe as to destroy his own worthy son."

(40) Then he said to all Israel, "You be on one side, and my son Jonathan and I will be on the other side." And the people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." (41) Therefore Saul said to the LORD God of Israel, "Give a perfect *lot*." So Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped. (42) And Saul said, "Cast *lots* between my son Jonathan and me." So Jonathan was taken. (43) Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, and said, "I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in my hand. So now I must die!" (44) Saul answered, "God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan." (45) But the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not! *As* the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die.

- Before we unpack this, I think we would do well to take note of how Saul has completely lost the respect and even the trust of his own men.
- The reason it's important we take note of this is that all Saul would have had to do to get out of this predicament was admit he was wrong.
- The problem is that Saul has to save face, so much so, that he's even willing to have his very own son put to death so he wouldn't have to.

- There's such an irony here because had Saul humbled himself and admitted he was wrong, he would have earned their trust and respect.
- Herein lies the irony, when Jonathan says to Saul, "so now I must die," he's the one who ends up earning their trust and respect as a result.
- It's for this very reason they come to his defense and show so much disdain towards Saul in their rescuing of Jonathan so he wouldn't die.

(46) Then Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place. (47) So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the people of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he harassed *them*. (48) And he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them. (49) The sons of Saul were Jonathan, Jishui, and Malchishua. And the names of his two daughters *were these*: the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal. (50) The name of Saul's wife *was* Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army *was* Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. (51) Kish *was* the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner *was* the son of Abiel. (52) Now there was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him for himself.

- The chapter comes to an end with a highlight of sorts on the strength of Saul, which may be for the purpose of bringing this to our attention.
- By that I mean the attention is all on Saul. Saul established his sovereignty, Saul fought, Saul harassed, Saul gathered and Saul plundered.
- Also, we're told of Saul's large family, which was a symbol of strength, then, we're told that Saul would take all the strong men for himself.

- Actually this taking of all the strong and valiant men for himself is a fulfillment of Samuel's prophecy to them, which we studied in chapter 8.
- The reason I mention this is because it will become germane to our understanding when we get to chapter fifteen, Lord willing, next week.
- Suffice it to say, chapter fifteen, like this chapter before it, is a huge chapter such that it's chalk full of so much personal application for us.